

## Vaginal Brachytherapy Treatment

This handout explains what will happen during your radiation treatment. If you have any questions, please talk with your doctor or nurse.

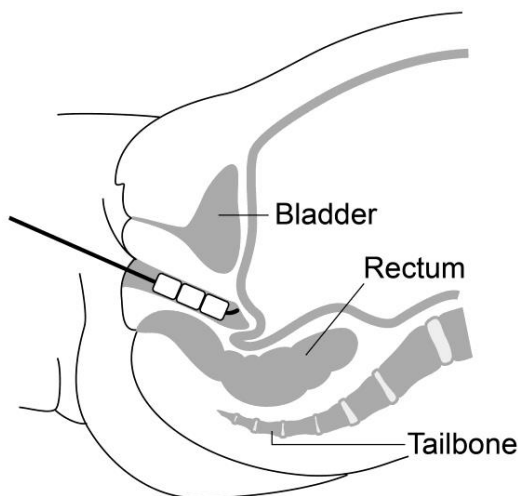
### Brachytherapy

Brachytherapy is a way of giving radiation to a small area. It is the placement of one or two small tubes inside the vagina. The tubes are called applicators. Radiation will travel into the applicator through thin cables. Your doctor prescribes the dose of radiation you receive.

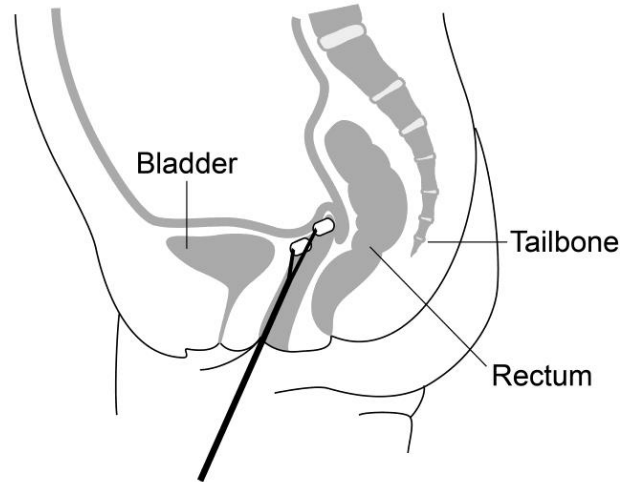
The treatment is given in Radiotherapy. Patients will have three to five treatments, with one or two each week. Each treatment takes about one hour. Patients may have this treatment along with daily external radiation treatments. Only one type of treatment (internal or external) is given per day.

### Applicators

The applicators vary in size and shape. Your doctor will choose the one that fits you best. Below is a drawing of the applicators used. It also shows where they are placed.



Vaginal Treatment with Cylinders



Vaginal Treatment with Ovoids

### Before the Procedure

If you take medicines, you may take them as usual. You may eat your normal diet but avoid eating a large heavy meal. You will be lying flat on your back for about an hour.

Arrive at the hospital about 15 minutes before your scheduled treatment. Park in the main hospital ramp and bring your parking card in with you. Check in at the Clinics Registration desk on Main Street (2<sup>nd</sup> Floor). Have your parking card stamped so you will not need to pay for parking. The person at this desk can tell you how to get to Radiotherapy. It is in module K4 in the basement (K4/B).

When you get to the department, check in at the reception desk and have a seat in the main waiting room. This is where your family or friends can wait for you. A staff member will take you to the treatment room.

You will be asked to change into a gown. You will need to remove all clothing from your waist down.

You may want to bring sandals or slippers to keep your feet warm. We have a small stereo in the room for your use. You may bring in your own music, such as an iPod to help you relax.

## **Vaginal Radiation Procedure**

### **Exam and Placement of the Applicator**

This will take about 10-15 minutes.

During the treatment you will lie on your back with your legs up in knee rests. You will remain like this until the treatment is over. The doctors will perform a pelvic exam to decide the size and shape of applicator to use.

The applicator is placed inside the vagina. This may cause some pressure but should not cause pain. If you have problems with pelvic exams (severe pain or anxiety), tell your doctor or nurse before the day of the treatment.

### **Radiation Treatment**

This will take about 5-20 minutes.

Cables from the machine are attached to the applicator. The radiation will slide inside the applicator and stay there for the correct amount of time. You will not feel the treatment as it is given. You may hear a clicking or humming noise from the machine. You will be alone in the room. We will be able to see and hear you. We can also talk to you through a speaker. After the treatment, the applicator will be removed, and the area cleaned. You will go back and change. Once you have changed, you may leave. If you took a sedative, you cannot drive. There are no other restrictions.

### **What to Expect After Treatment**

Some very light vaginal bleeding, or discharge is normal. This should stop within a day or two.

You may have some burning or irritation when you first urinate. Drink 8-10 glasses of fluid (water is preferred) each day for the next 1-2 days.

You may have mild diarrhea. This may be due to irritation to the rectum from the radiation or anxiety from the treatment.

You may feel tired after the treatment if you took a medicine to help you relax. This is a short-acting side effect.

You are **not** radioactive after the treatment, only during the treatment. There are no restrictions for you being around other people or pets.

You will be given a vaginal dilator or vibrator, during one of your visits. You will need to use this at home to prevent the vagina from getting tight and narrow. You will receive a handout about this. The doctor or nurse will teach you how to use it.

It is safe to have sex between treatments unless your surgeon has told you not to. Follow your surgeon's guidelines, which are based upon your healing and length of time since surgery.

### **When to Call**

- Fever above 100°F
- Abdominal pain
- Burning with urination or blood in the urine lasting more than 24 hours
- Any questions or concerns

## **Follow-Up Visit**

Your doctor will tell you when to return for a follow-up visit. It is one to two months after your last treatment.

## **Who to Call**

Radiotherapy Clinic  
**(608) 263-8500**

Toll free: **1-800-323-8942**.

When calling after hours, holidays and weekends, your call will be sent to the paging operator. Ask for the Radiotherapy doctor on call for Dr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Give the operator your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

Your doctor is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Phone number is: \_\_\_\_\_.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2023. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5492.